



From June 2023
(Volume 138)
From July 2023





Well, I've been really busy with all my Photo History volumes because when we got back from our USA holiday, I had stacks of photos to sort out plus the daily Blog that I had done religiously every day during our stay there

The ongoing volumes, like this, seemed to be on the back burner because the USA road trip, which is now finally finished, took four volumes plus one volume for the blog. It was great fun sorting out the shots I wanted to include but that is my 'bag' so I don't really expect others to fully understand the satisfaction I personally get out of this. Sometimes, when various family members and others enjoy these books I feel it is all worthwhile, and recently Lynn and I are looking at 'old' volumes and enjoying reminiscing and it is amazing how many memories the books bring back.

Anyway, on with Volume 138.

The family are all great with Tammy happy with her life now despite odd times of sadness when Ben is remembered...not that he is ever forgotten. Likewise, Larnie, Lynn and I really miss him too. Larnie is doing so well at her job and is well thought of and seems to have taken over from Josh, her boss, in his absence, despite a massive worrying workload. Last night we had tea at Tammy's and the four of us laughed hysterically the whole time we were there as they recounted their USA trip in detail. DP has just finished Shindig, his festival and the costs involved were much higher than anticipated despite its success and big numbers attending. He was here yesterday and helped me trim the massively overgrown bushes in the front garden. He is a total pleasure and we all enjoy one another's company. We also showed him our plots at Green Acres in North Wield. Not sad or macabre. Just sensible. Tammy and DP have now seen it and approve, which is great.

Lynn is a total star. She runs daily in Grovelands Park, runs (while I walk) every Saturday in The 5k Park run, helps me on the allotment and with gardening plus being the best wife any guy could hope for. Our secret is that we laugh together and on that note I should add that we are planning a celebration of ten years on my allotment. The party on January 16th next year, which, coincidentally, is also my 80th birthday. So far over 60 folk have accepted our invitation and Tammy really wonderfully, has offered her home as our venue for the three hour bash with her great musician playing.. Really looking forward to that.

Angela had a small head cyst removed recently, but is stoical about that and it is healing well, while her mother, Mary, seems to be doing well alone. Peachy just yesterday, got her pass in Drama which is a great achievement (see photo) and she is really enjoying her course, whilst our Beau is happy with mina, his lovely girlfriend and has just returned from a break in Corfu with her. Otterlie our lovely great granddaughter, is growing beautifully and DP will be sending me photos which will be included in this book hopefully. (Yes they are in!) On a personal level, I am swimming and 'gyming' alternate day and this is at the unearthly hour of 6.15am and with the Park Run, allotment and gardening this keeps me fit and active.

Our extended family keep in touch via WhatsApp and that means a lot to us too.

Our 'Lads' Walk' is still ongoing, on the last Friday of every month and despite all being older we enjoy one another's company (Cyril and I are charged with organising the next one in Standon in Hertfordshire) The swimmers also have a monthly chat over coffee and cakes in Crews Hill garden centre (today is the July one) and also four of us meet once a month in each others homes for a fun quiz and coffee/cakes as well. Tonight we are off to see 'Beating the Retreat' with Cyril and Viv and we have a very full calendar of seeing friends, having the odd meal out and celebrating anniversaries and birthday (many 80th ones!) so, all in all, Lynn and I are busy and maximising every drop of fun in our remaining years.

Yes, we are aware of how close and possibly dependent we are on one another and accept that at any time one of us will be alone. This fact is never spoken about but is obviously the 'elephant in the room' and it is there in the background. Neither of us are morbid about this because it is inevitable hence my writing it here so that others can see our attitude and acceptance. Nevertheless we try to make the other one less reliant with sensible things like showing how the gas and electricity readings are sent over, how the accounts work, where passwords are and the minutiae of daily life. I now even know where my clean socks are kept!

Anyway enough of that...we are very happy folk and constantly laugh which is such a wonderful thing to be able to say.

I hope I have not embarrassed anyone by my frank notes here but I am really happy with all my friends and family and especially . Lynn, my fantastic wife , so I hope these words convey that

July 2023



Yes, I know the hat is old and well worn but so am I



...and I love it!



I kinda love this shot, because it's natural, not posed, I guess



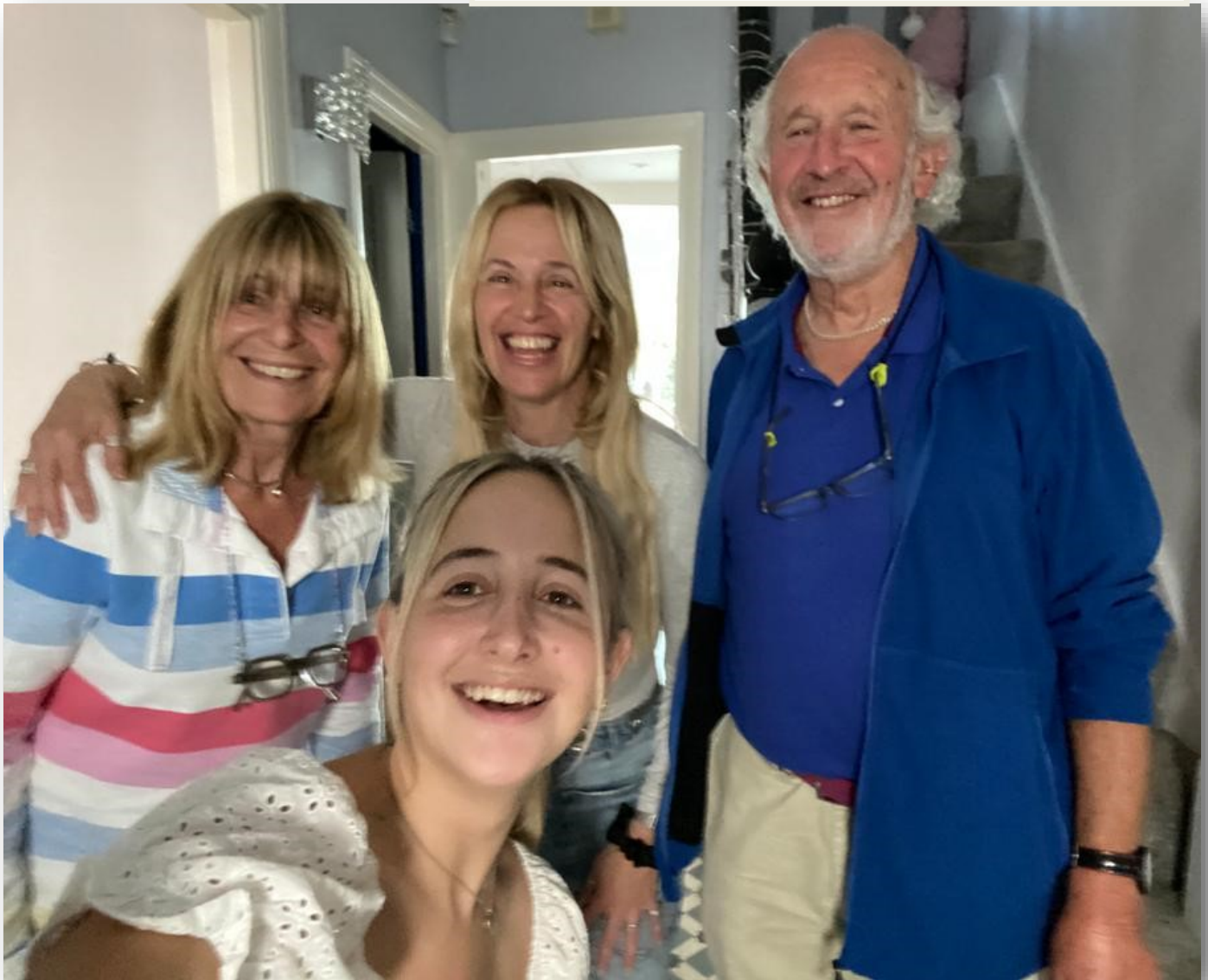
Photo History

Hard to believe but all our good friends are getting, like us, older. This was at Ivor's 80th. Still lovely (well maybe the girls are...Not Ivor!)





Not often that we get a family shot (well part of the family anyway) all looking so happy. This was at Tammys in July '23



Possibly not relevant but where should I put a picture of this magnificent Roman snail we met on the path at Bulls Mill where they all 'hang out'



Ottie..
4 months



Photo History



Ottie July 2023







I think the proud smile says it all...Brilliant Peachy!!





escapologist was reputed to have said
just prior to his death in 1859. "No, you
said you had the key"



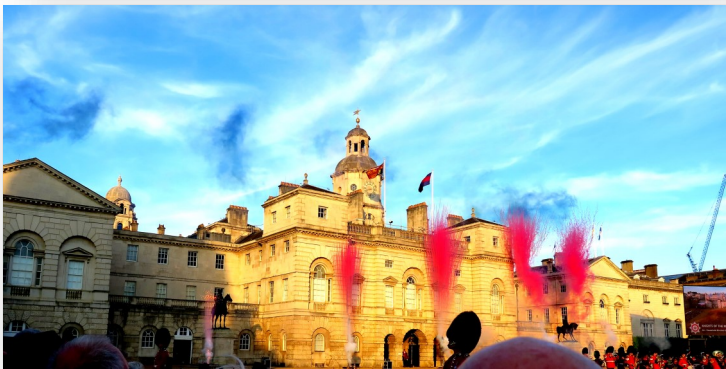


A sunny day in
Trafalgar Square





Beating the Retreat on Horse guard's Parade in July 2023

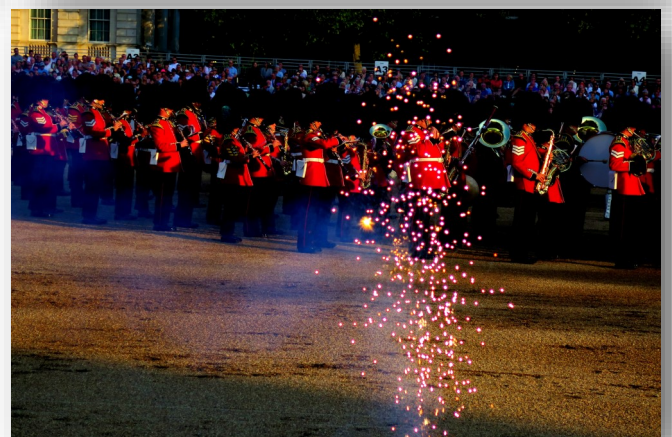


Beating Retreat has its origins in the early years of organised warfare when the beating of drums and the parading of Post Guards heralded the closing of camp gates and the lowering of flags at the end of the day.





Photo History









It was a lovely hot summer's night and the display was so well executed and the precision of the soldiers was wonderful. The screens helped everyone to see in detail what might otherwise have been missed.





These guns are very old and in great condition and the 10 rounds of fire made everyone jump out of their seats (despite being forewarned)





The lone guitarist played renditions of some well known modern songs and encouraged the audience to join in





The flares and flames added to the visual spectacle and every time I aimed the camera they shot out somewhere else ...so these shots were really hard to get!

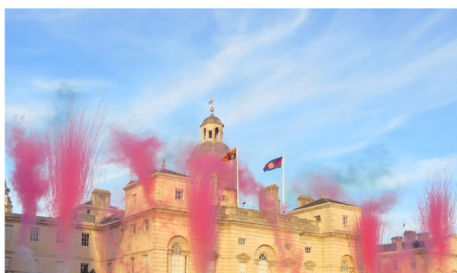
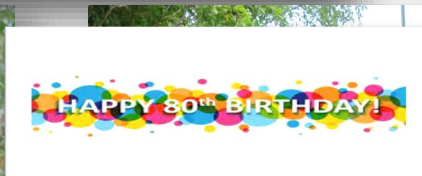
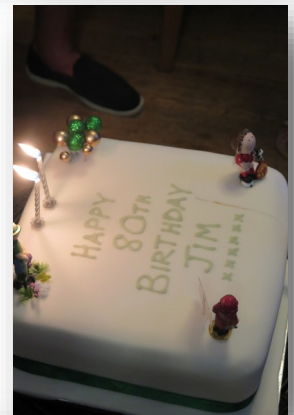




Photo History



A really frantic and great day. Starting with The Park Run...closely followed by a wonderful lunch in Bushey to celebrate peter & Maryanne's Golden wedding and then rushing to Enfield to celebrate Jim's 80th birthday. Days like this , celebrating with friends and their families are very special.





Mc Abre and Sons Funeral Directors.



*You are dying to
meet us*



Photo History

Rain showers, gusty wind and cld. That was the weather that we endured when watching the Battle Proms at Hatfield House. It was an







Photo History





Seems very close to home-





Laying in bed at the end of a rainy, chilly July day, I got to thinking about life -my life- as it is now.

Very rarely does one note down how one feels at a precise moment and probably it's right that one shouldn't constantly look at things and analyse them too closely but conversely, sometimes it's right to 'take stock'. Maybe that's what I'm doing.

I'm happy, very happy..and that's a really positive thing to be able to say. Lynn is a total delight to have as a lifelong partner and, yes, we bicker and argue frequently but I guess that's just us. But, we laugh all the time and totally understand one another's moods, foibles, likes, hates and insecurities. We try to bolster one another's egos and self esteem but also shout and belittle one another as a retaliation when angered.

Luckily, the positive exceeds and overpowers the negative so maybe we have achieved a life balance.

All I know is that we are incredibly close and totally feel comfortable when the other one is present

Anyway..on to how life seems to have developed a sort of pattern now. Quite different from my working life which amazingly was for over 50 years. I hadn't planned retirement other than a desire to see the world and not settle into a rut of doing mundane things

Luckily Lynn feels the same.

We have now travelled a lot and seen amazing places doing the travel in our own way and not following usual patterns. I think this is possibly our style and keeps us interested in people, places and life. I hope this also keeps us interesting because I'd hate for us to be boring.

Swimming or going to the gym early every day has become a healthy routine and another real plus side is making so many new friends there.

Hardly a moment goes by without me chatting to fellow swimmers or people in the gym and coffee mornings at Crews Hill garden centre and quiz days at one another's homes are a great spin off.

Meanwhile Lynn either runs in the park where she also has made friends or, if weather is bad, she will use the exercise bike.

This fitness need is now added to by our Saturday 5km park run..or in my case 'park walk' where I take great pride in constantly coming in last out of as many as 300 participants...and I love it.

Walking locally, we realise how many people we know and how much a part of the local scene we have become..the nail parlour, newsagent, barber, neighbours..and so many faces that pass and smile a greeting. This is almost a rural environment in this aspect and we love it. That and it's proximity to local shops and the convenience of such great transport access plus the beauty of the park and close countryside. We really feel that this could not be better. Sure there are 'better' neighbourhoods, nicer gardens, better shops, but it is a real asset when one can be content with what one has and not always looking over one's shoulder wanting something else. Satisfaction and not complacency.

Our garden is totally different to others with Lynn's signature yellow Marigolds on sticks rudely gesturing defiantly to anyone looking out from the house

A bidet and large wash basin filled with plants is something few other gardens can boast .

Through an arch is our secret garden ..a hideaway oasis that defies the urban situation and behind that, a further sunken area naturalises which we find delightful.

Cont.



Admittedly, it's not everybody's ideal garden..but it is ours.

Likewise our house is our home..filled with so many small objects, pictures etc each with its own story and memories.

This is a contented environment where we feel comfortable.

Yes, like everyone else,we have problems but we work them out together. The strains and stresses of life have given us the ability to appreciate what we have now and I hope this 'opening up' does not reek of complacency and self satisfaction

I am almost 80 now and I intend this to be a small note of my satisfaction and happiness at this stage of my life

A big kiss to my beautiful and fun Lynn but I must not overlook my fanatic family and extended family.

I really feel such a strong bond between us all that will live on far longer than I will, by virtue of what we all feel for one another and maybe that's the joy of being a smallish family that we are able to really know and love one another intimately.

Notes from an old and happy Ralph..July 2023

For anyone who doesn't recognise this character...it's Wreck-It-Ralph





Photo History



We met Penny and Barry for the first time (Dan's parents).
We enjoyed a wonderful meal at their home in Finchley





Photo History



AI in hospitality is failing. It will NOT be used after the end of 2023 A Fellows Broadsheet

No, It's obviously not the case but hopefully this heading grabbed your attention.

I appreciate that I am guilty of using AI methods (but in a less than subtle way) but while you are here, maybe hear me out.

Firstly, let me introduce myself. I am Ralph Kley FIH, a fellow of the IOH for approx. 60 years. Yes, I am old, very old, but I think I still have retained my sanity and feel that my viewpoint is now more than valid.

AI is, and will be, a valuable asset in hospitality, but, and you knew there would be a but, it needs people like me to put the other side of the coin and I hope that my small quiet, reasoned voice will be heard.

To put this in context, we stayed very recently in various accommodation styles in the USA, one of which was a 'Virtual Front Desk' (VFD). The difficulty we encountered in gaining access proved so unacceptable it prompted this broadsheet.

Pre-payment had been made, but pre-registration had not. I was forced to contact the VFD by phone as none of my entered details were accepted. This proved both time consuming, complicated and totally frustrating. After 45 minutes access was finally achieved.

Luckily the general manager, who explained that he was not officially in the hotel, assisted us, but then found our room key pad inoperative. Otherwise only domestic staff with no technical knowledge were present. No other room access solution would have been immediately available

It transpires that only 50% of guests liked this system. Food for thought

I am pretty IT literate but my whole point is that my demographic are not all IT savvy but this can also apply to younger people. The one thing here is that hospitality is changing. not necessarily for the good of its guest. A small clue is in the word...'hospitality' and this was blatantly not evident. My mantra is that it is rapidly becoming inhospitable

Eurostat statistics: Tourists aged 65 or over accounted for nearly 1 in 4 tourism nights for private purposes. Surely this is a revenue stream that must be seriously considered. I have been labelled as 'The Silent Generation' but obviously I am far from silent

I researched how AI is being used in hospitality and in my opinion it is very one sided - the guest not being the primary consideration.

Hospitality websites (OTA's) have 100's and 1000's of potential locations to offer the traveller. List toppers are tailored by AI using knowledge gained from previous searches and sponsored adverts pay for their position. Not a totally free choice.

Photos are used to encourage choices. Deep Learning is used to select which photos appear on top. However they can so easily misrepresent reality.

AI uses Dynamic Pricing and by taking in all external factors, achieves the maximum room price in real time. Is this fair on the public. I equate it to a menu price changing while I'm still enjoying my meal. Hotels pay a high commission to these websites but direct contact by the guest can offer better value.

Virtual assistants and chatbots are often used. This is another unacceptable intrusion into personal privacy. One's every move is known; messages are not private...but this does not make it an acceptable marketing tool.



Photo History



Natural Language Processing (NLP) is still costly to implement but with Google and Amazon working on it we can 'enjoy' that very soon. (For anyone taking this as gospel, it was meant ironically)

Sentiment Analysis and Emotion Analysis 'help' (for want of a better word) hotels understand what we are experiencing and how we will react. In milliseconds reviews can be collated and guest comments and feelings analysed. This could obviously be in the guests favour but it will also be used to check out the competition.

Fraud detection is an important requirement but it is weighted on the side of the provider. Charge back from fraudulent card use is costly for hotels and extra verification is utilised at check in. It is understandable that some well-known organisations use sophisticated fraud detection methods and they won't reveal what they are. However the majority of guests are honest and should be treated as such.

Exponents of AI are encouraged to adopt it from many attractive viewpoints: cost cutting, staff reductions, better guest experience, increased utilisation of existing facilities and many more attractive inducements. It is hailed as freeing up hotels from repetitive tasks, thereby freeing staff for other duties. Surely hospitality is dependent on repetitive duties. The real incentive for accepting AI is cost cutting. Importantly it overlooks the fact that personal choice is an essential ingredient and not everything is predictable.

It should be remembered that the definition of hospitality is the relationship between a guest and a host, where the host receives the guest with goodwill. Interaction has an effect on all involved and there is warmth in this interaction. Hospitality has a unique theatrical quality and this must be treasured. Sterility must be avoided and the uninspiring vacuum caused by formulaic systems eliminated.

AI discourages interaction with fellow human beings but this requirement is essential in a normal life balance. We are unwittingly being used by AI to manipulate ourselves. This totally unacceptable manipulation is the basis of my argument

Maybe the over-zealous introduction of AI in hospitality at all costs should be questioned. If this is the case my words will not have been in vain

Ralph M Kley FIH



Before our USA road trip I had taken part in a IOH webinar and the theme was about AI as it was being adopted in hospitality (with an emphasis on hotels) I listened and realised it appeared to be a one-sided viewpoint, namely, from the point of view of the hotel groups. The customer reactions seem to be overlooked with an assumption that everyone would, eventually, learn how to use it. I voiced my disagreement with their discussions and our experience in a VFD (Virtual Front Desk) hotel in San Jose reinforced my viewpoint.

Obviously I am not a luddite and fully appreciate that it will be adopted and it will be immensely useful but the question that must be addressed is that many folk are not (or don't want to do all their transactions/bookings etc on line and 'real people' are essential in hospitality. I spoke to Sam Coulson, president of the IOH and he asked me to write a broadsheet on the subject. This is the version (before any edits they may make) and if there are any comments I will print them later



Photo History



Red Poll Cattle introduction to local parks. I have volunteered to assist in this project

Initially we will be introducing the cattle at Forty Hall, in the area highlighted on the attached poster as Phase 1. This phase will last at least until the end of August 2023, when we will review the project and the feedback from the community, and consider if we expand the grazing to other areas of Forty Hall and to Trent Park. You'll be helping the Grazing Management Team at Capel Manor College to monitor the cattle, seeing if they're happy in the park. The Looker role is very flexible, so you're not bound to participate on particular days or rotas. We just want you to enjoy the park, report any issues to the Grazing Management Team, and help us share knowledge about the project to other park goers.



Jamie Kukadia

Senior Engineer | Watercourses Team





Cyril and I led the July 'Lads' walk . It was from the Star in Standon around Standon Lordship and we did the recce on the previous Monday (Just as the Standon Calling festival had finished).





Photo History



A five mile walk in wonderful countryside





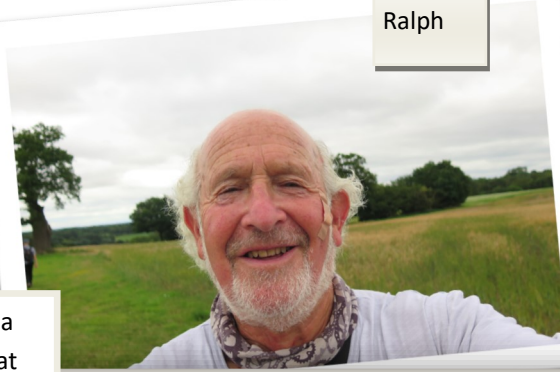
The Standon
Loop Walk
through the
River Rib Valley



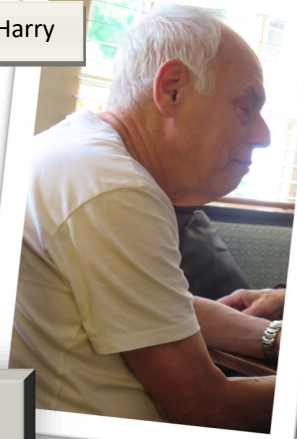


Photo History

Ralph



Harry



The Star for a
great lunch
at the walk's end

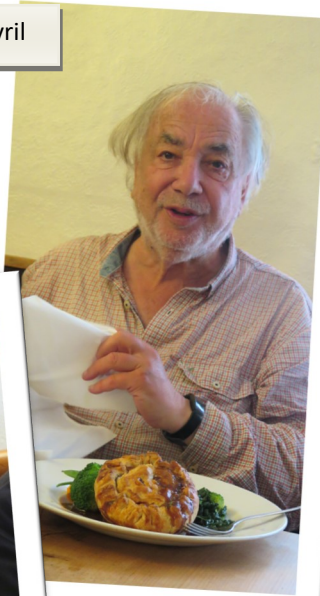
Gerald (C)



Alan (S)



Cyril



Stuart (P)



Ronnie



Gerald (L)



Stewart (H)



Morris



Ben (R)

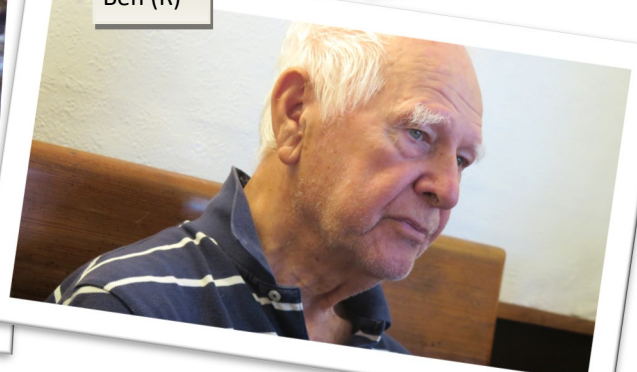
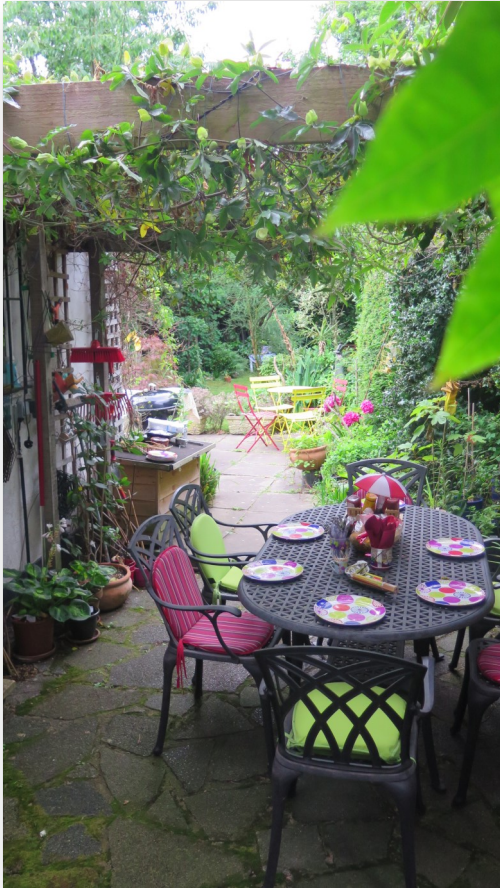




Photo History



August BBQ..Planned to avoid the rainy weather

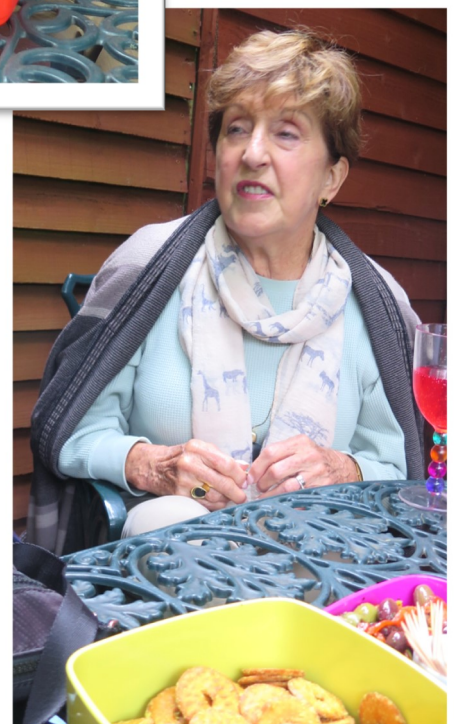




Photo History



Despite the serious expressions we had a fun time and managed to enjoy the BBQ just in time before the heavens opened





QUIZ!



QUIZ!



QUIZ!

Michael, Roy and Bob came here for our monthly quiz morning





August was nearly all bleak weatherwise, so as we were going to The old Vic to see 'Groundhog Day' (once again), we decided, as the weather was great, to make the most of it. We walked from Holborn, via Somerset House, and across Waterloo Bridge. To The Cut. It was such a pleasure to see blue sky for a change



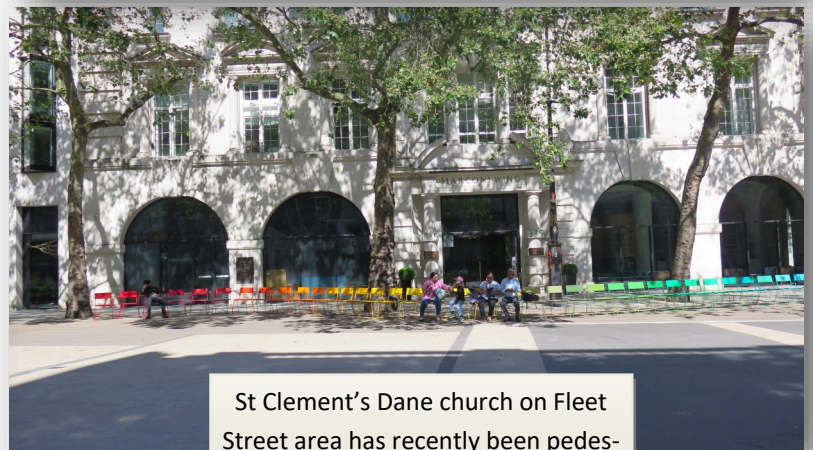
Strand & Aldwych junction



Somerset House terrace by The Thames



Somerset House entrance



St Clement's Dane church on Fleet Street area has recently been pedestrianised and looks excellent

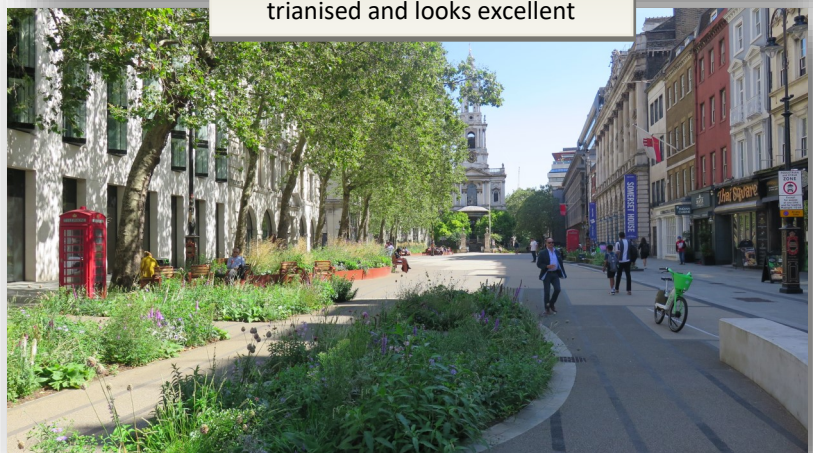


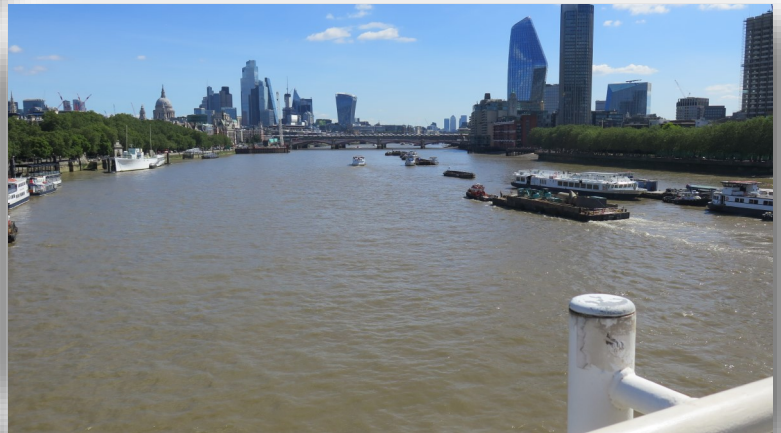




Photo History



Somerset House courtyard



We never tire of the spectacle of the ever-changing London Skyline when seen from Waterloo Bridge





Southbank Centre



An old forgotten remnant....The Hole In the Wall Beer Garden



Stage set for the start of 'Groundhog Day' at the Old Vic



Masons of Temperance Society, Blackfriars Road. A hansom building, now empty..



I do hope it is not torn down



A leisurely day. ...a snack at Itsu, and then coffee and cakes from Paul's in Green Park in the sun...After that we went to The Summer Exhibition at the RA. Lynn thought it was mostly rubbish but (as maybe you'll agree) there were some very imaginative pieces there as well as a lot of 'questionable' art. I took so many photos, they will continue into the next book...sorry about that...



Art Lovers get so involved in studying the paintings that I often find they are really good subjects. Probably not really acceptable without asking permission , but that would spoil the spontaneity. The pictures I have selected are the ones that I found really fascinating ...do you agree...??

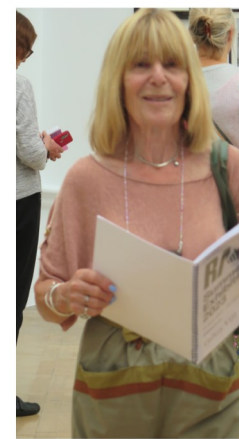
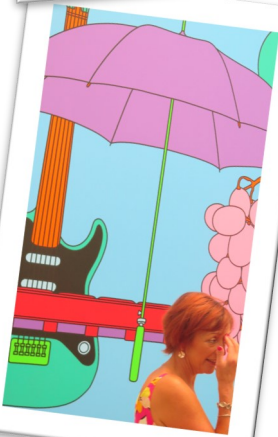
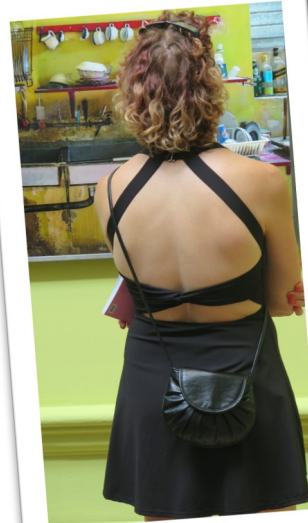
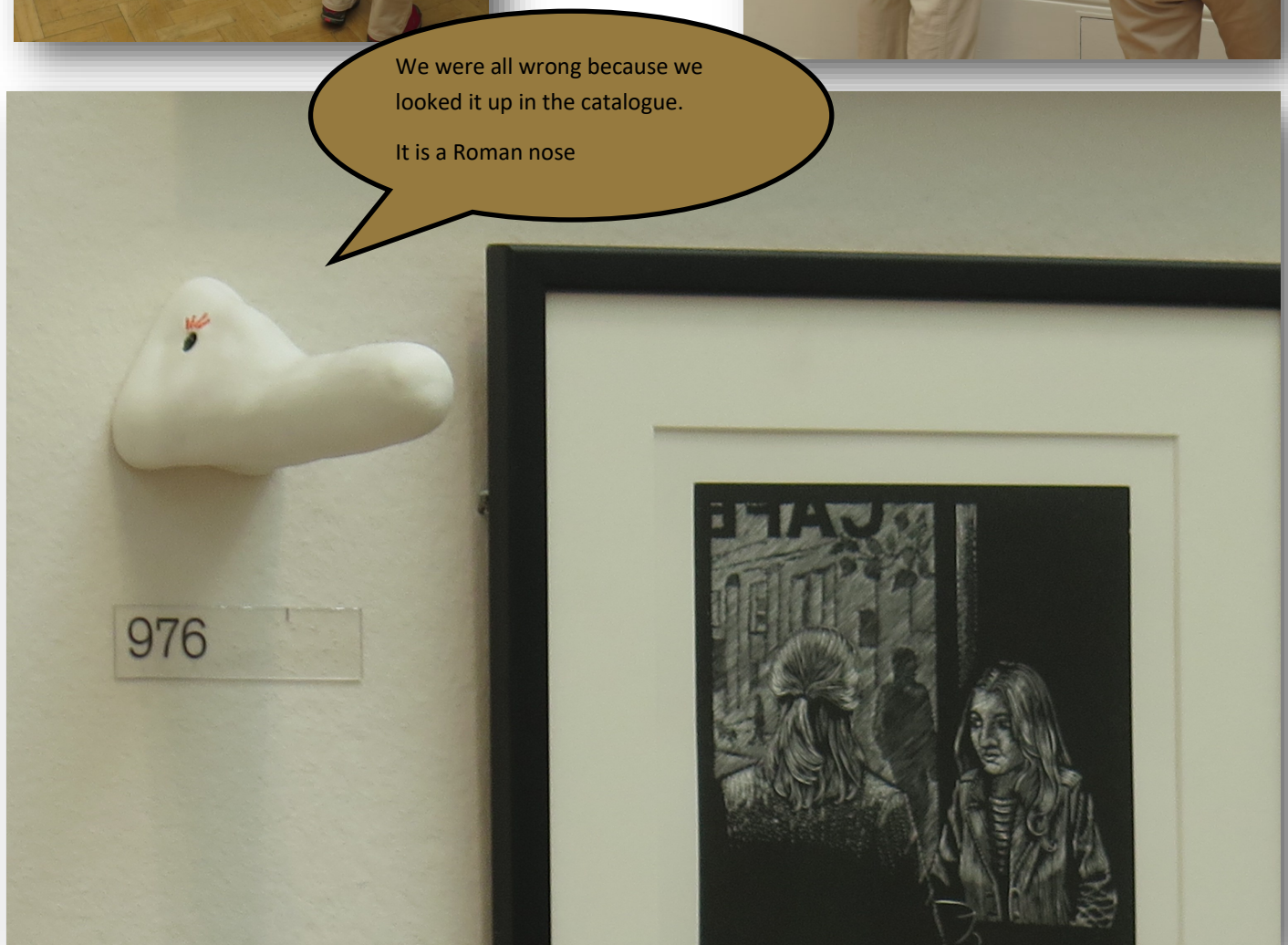




Photo History





The lengths that some people go to...Lynn noticed that this lady was totally colour coordinated with this art installation





It can be tiring walking round the Summer Exhibition but none of the seats seemed to be designed for comfort







...sorry, lots more in the next volume.

I did warn you.